

ABIDING IN CHRIST,
ABOUNDING IN HOPE

VOICES & VISIONS

DECEMBER/JANUARY 2008

SECTION B

Dreams of Diversity

By Rev. Angie Wright, Founding Pastor,
Beloved Community UCC, Birmingham, Alabama

It is often said that 11:00 Sunday morning is the most segregated hour of the week. It is sad, but true. While I understand the myriad of reasons for the segregation of our churches, I still find it heartbreaking. When I set out to create a multiracial church, there were many who said how it couldn't (or shouldn't) be done. And yet this is what I know: there is a bottomless hunger among God's people to worship together, to break bread together, to become family, to become one.

In 2000, with the help of the Southeast Conference and Local Church Ministries of the UCC, I became the founding Pastor of Beloved Community United Church of Christ in Birmingham, Alabama, still one of the most segregated cities in the country. Beloved is one of few intentionally multiracial churches in our denomination, and it is a very special community. Beloved is diverse in race, class, mental and physical (dis)abilities, religious background and in many other ways. There is a sweet, sweet, holy spirit at Beloved that you will rarely find.

Here are some reflections on what we have learned in this ministry of reconciliation. We hope that they may shed some light for other congregations who have dreams of diversity:

1. Do it for the right reasons. Creating diversity is not an easy thing to do. It is not everyone's calling, and it is not something just anyone can do. I have listened to many church leaders lament their congregation's inability to become diverse. Perhaps they are approaching this goal with misguided motivations. I would urge much prayer and discernment before anyone sets out to create a multiracial church. You need to ask yourself a tough question: why do you want to become diverse? Because you will feel better about your identity as a congregation? Because you think your neighbors will feel better about you? Because you feel guilty that your church is not diverse? Because you think it ought to be? Because of pride? Because you think it's a cool thing to do? Because it will stabilize your church financially? My advice is this: create a multiracial church only if it is your true calling. You need to be called, even compelled, by God to do this work. That means that discernment is the first and most important issue;

2. Your leaders need to be experienced in the work of racial reconciliation. Much of Beloved's success is due to my long history in the community as a reliable, trustworthy person devoted to racial and economic justice. The same is true of many of our members. As individuals, we had good track records and relationships, which lent us credibility and trust when we started a multiracial church;

3. Your leaders need to have done their own personal work of healing their own racism and their own racial wounds, and that work needs to continue. Leaders — clergy and lay — also need to be trained to guide others in moving through that painful but liberating process of healing;

4. It isn't just about treating everyone the same on Sunday morning. It isn't about being "color-blind," or treating everyone as if they were the same (which they aren't!). It goes much deeper than having a mix of people gather on Sunday mornings. It is about power, and how it is shared. It is about privilege, and whether it is acknowledged, and how it plays out in the dynamics of the congregation. It is about who makes decisions, and how they are made. It is about who handles the money, and how it is handled, and how freely and to whom financial information is disclosed. It is about who leads the church in worship and who leads the church in decisions about money and ministry. It is about telling the truth and hearing the truth, even when it hurts.

5. At Beloved, we talk — a lot — about issues that divide us, especially race. These issues are often included in my sermons — which makes sense, since they were common subjects in Jesus' sermons as well. We have panel discussions and hold diversity trainings. We have a Race Matters Book Club, and we host Movie Nights to watch and discuss movies

such as Crash. We talk pretty honestly, and we listen pretty openly, and it isn't always easy, but it works.

6. If someone thinks it's about race (or gender, or sexual orientation), it is! That's my philosophy. A majority culture is often unable to see how their unconscious prejudices reveal themselves in daily actions or conversations, while a minority culture often experiences the words and deeds of the majority culture as laced with the poisons of prejudice and privilege. A minority culture has a heightened awareness of these things, borne of historical and current pain. The majority culture often is in denial, because their words or actions are not consciously borne of prejudice or privilege, and it is always painful to see yourself in a negative light.

This is how I see it: if my words or actions cause pain because they are *experienced* as racist, then I need to accept that. Regardless of my intentions, my words and deeds have caused pain. If I have caused pain, I want to know that. I want to know what words and actions are experienced as racist. I want to be more careful in the future. I want to build trust with my brothers and sisters. If it is about race for them, then whether or not I intended it and even realized it, it is also about race for me. If it is about homophobia to my gay brothers and sisters, then it is about homophobia to me. If it is about anti-semitism to my Jewish friends (as was the movie *Passion of the Christ*), then it is about anti-semitism to me.

7. A multiracial church has to be serious not only about challenging interpersonal expressions of racism and privilege; we also have to be serious about challenging injustice in our community and our society. We have to take the risk of naming and challenging the principalities of racism, privilege and prejudice up close and afar. The individual and social dimensions of our ministry need to be in sync!

8. A multicultural church requires everyone to give up a little something in order to gain so much more. Are you willing to change? You have to be willing to hire a diverse staff and elect a diverse lay leadership — not just as window dressing, but with real shared leadership and power. You have to be willing to change your worship and music style. You have to accept that there is more than one right way to preach a sermon (or respond to one!) or to sing a song (or to respond to one!) or to make a decision or to run a meeting or to carry out a ministry. This is the answer to the oft-asked question, "why won't *they* come to *our* church?" You have to be willing to change!

Finally, the covenant of Beloved Community Church states that we "celebrate all people as precious children of God." By the grace of God, we really do that. By the grace of God, we believe that every single person has something to give and something to receive. There is no "us" and "them." We are all poor and we are all rich. We are all strong and we are all weak. We are all faithful and we all fall short. We all have something to teach and we all have something to learn. That is the joy of a multicultural church. We are being made whole, and every single day, we give our deepest thanks to God for the gift of Beloved Community.



"I Will Pour Out My Spirit Upon All . . .
And Your Young Shall See Visions And
Your Old Shall Dream Dreams."

ACTS 2:17

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Dear Friends,

A pastor remarked to me recently, "the United Church of Christ today is not the denomination that I joined forty years ago". He mourned the many changes that have marked our path as a church over our fifty years of history, the swirls of controversy around words such as "diversity" and

FROM THE
CONFERENCE
MINISTER



"inclusivity". His comment has caused me to pause. Are we a different denomination than we were at our beginning? Or are there essentials that are a part of our DNA as a denomination that have remained constant over the years, which mark us as recognizable from one generation to the next? Section 2 of the Preamble to the Constitution of the United Church of Christ names this tension eloquently as it notes that

"(The UCC) claims as its own the faith of the historic Church expressed in its ancient creeds and reclaimed in the basic insights of the Protestant Reformers. It affirms the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own...."

As Reformed Protestants, we look to scriptures as our guide. The story of the early church as it unfolds in the Acts of the Apostles and the writings of the Apostle Paul are stories of believers struggling to understand themselves as communities of faith in a diverse, tumultuous and changing world. Were they to be Jews? Were Gentiles welcomed? What portions of the Jewish law were to be observed by followers of Jesus? What was the place of women, of slaves? These questions have continued to be a part of the Church in each era, but in the end faithful Christians

continue to ask them and struggle with the answers.

The United Church of Christ is a product of a particular moment in Christian history, a time during which ecumenism, the impulse to Christian unity, was a "leading edge" part of church life. As Lydia Veliko notes so eloquently in her article in this paper, this is a core value to us in the UCC, and it shapes the way in which we engage issues of diversity and inclusivity today. These issues and Christian unity in her words "are a part of one and the same bloodstream". I might add that these issues have been at the heart of what it means to be Christian since the

earliest days of the Church, and our continued conversations around them, are only a part of a conversation Christians have been having through the ages.

Have we become a church that is "not the denomination it was 40 or 50 years ago?" No doubt we have been buffeted and pulled by the social and cultural changes that surround us, as have all churches. We have been changed by the movement of the Holy Spirit, the insights of theologians, and much more. And yet, I would suggest that our vocation and calling have remained constant and vital, our identity is shaped by the same values around which we were organized, and "Jesus Christ remains the same yesterday, today, and always". I believe that the United Church of Christ is uniquely and wonderfully equipped by God to engage the complex and stimulating issues of diversity and "radical hospitality". We were at our beginning a people who dared to dream of a day "that they may all be one". The same courage marks our calling today.

Peace,

Tim Downs

Timothy C. Downs, Conference Minister

EMMANUEL CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES:

A New Church Start in Tucker, Georgia

By: Rev. Cameron Trimble,
Associate Conference Minister of Church Development

One year ago, Rev. Dr. Lewis Kola came into my office and told me about his dream. This dream — this calling — had been growing in Lewis for over 10 years. Finally, on this day, he felt the time was right to make his dream a reality — God was calling Lewis to birth a church. He said, "Imagine a congregation whose membership comes from diverse racial backgrounds. Imagine a congregation that consists of people from different cultural orientations. Imagine a congregation that seeks authentic relationships based on the love of God. Imagine a congregation where people are nurtured in the Word of God. Imagine a congregation that seeks to be an agent of healing and transformation in individuals, families, and the communities. Imagine a congregation that is welcoming and affirming, open and inclusive. Imagine Emmanuel Christian Ministries." As I listened to Lewis tell me his story, I was struck by his deep sense of faith and his earnest desire to courageously respond to this calling which God had placed upon him. I knew we had a potential church planter in this man.

Lewis is a third generation Christian. He grew up in both Ghana and Nigeria, coming to the United States in 1986. In the US, he received the Bachelor of Arts in Theology and Psychology at American Baptist College in Nashville, Tennessee. He completed seminary at Candler School of Theology of Emory University. In 2004, he completed the Doctor of Ministry degree (Pastoral Counseling) at Columbia Theological Seminary. He has experience in Pastoring local churches as well as chaplaincy services in Atlanta and Chicago. While Lewis is certainly well accomplished professionally, if you ask Lewis of his greatest support in preparation for this undertaking, he would tell you about his family. Married to a PK (Preacher's Kid) originally from Germany, Dorothea is a certified CPE supervisor and works at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta at Scottish Rite. Dorothea and Lewis have two beautiful daughters who are the delight of his life and his greatest supporters.



New Church Development

Part of The Nehemiah Initiative

A MINISTRY OF THE SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Over this past year, Lewis faithfully completed the Conference assessment process for new church developers. He engaged in discernment both with the New Church Development Advisory Team and with his association Church and Ministry committee. In June of this year, Lewis was unanimously approved by the Southeast Conference Board of Directors to plant Emmanuel Christian Ministries. He is now working to gather his launch team and get to know the community.

As our new churches begin the birthing process, they will need your help. You can help Emmanuel Christian Ministries by donating the following:

- Equipments (instruments, sounds, lights, transportation)
- Children and youth ministry supplies
- Curriculum (Christian education materials)
- Copy machine
- DVD/CD player
- Television (for children)
- Video recorder
- Christian literatures for church library
- Sacrament of the Table items
- Baptismal bowl
- Tables and chairs
- Keyboards
- Camera
- Lap top computer
- Desk top computer
- Printer
- Overhead projector

If you have any of these items to donate, you may contact Rev. Dr. Lewis Kola at lewiskola@gmail.com. For information about ways that you can help our other new churches, go to <http://secucc.org/development/support.php>. We appreciate your prayers and support as we birth new churches in the Southeast Conference. To find out more about this new church, go to <http://www.ecmucc.org> or check out the conference website.

VOICES & VISIONS

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Interview with Lydia Veliko

1. As the Minister for Ecumenical Relations of the Office of General Ministries of the United Church of Christ, could you briefly describe your responsibilities on behalf of the UCC?

As "Ecumenical Officer", my work falls into four categories.

The first is to nurture our bilateral and multilateral dialogues, some of which have become formal partnerships – like with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Presbyterian Church USA and the Reformed Church in America in "The Formula of Agreement"; and partners in missions and ministry with the Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa, and the Alliance of Baptists. There are of course, a number of other significant ecumenical conversations.

The second relates to ecumenical life in the various settings of our denomination. I encourage our Conferences, Associations and local congregations of the United Church of Christ as they engage in the work of ecumenism, others in partnership the Parish Life and Leadership Team.

The third relates to nurturing our denomination's life in "council." The UCC is a member of many conciliar bodies, the most prominent of which are the National Council of Churches in the US; the World Council of Churches; Churches Uniting in Christ; and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

The fourth and final category is in the area of interfaith relations. The UCC works through the National Council of Churches to nurture and maintain relationships especially with the Jewish and the Muslim communities in the US, and has recently begun to develop denominational resources in the area of interfaith dialogue and theological deliberation.

2. To some, Christian unity stands in the way of our prophetic vocation and calling in the UCC. How do you respond? How do we keep a sense of our particular identity in the UCC without allowing the impulse to Christian unity simply reducing us to the lowest common denominator? And, some UCC scholars have said that the ecumenism which was at the heart of the formation of the UCC leads us naturally to the next steps of celebrating our diversity in many ways. Could

you comment on that?

Some say that we cannot be strong proponents of our convictions and at the same time maintain relationships with other Christians. This is a popular, but false, dichotomy. All Christians, including UCC ones, are compelled by the Gospel to a life of witness for peace, justice, and reconciliation. This mandate and vocation laid upon us by our baptisms is not unique to the UCC, but we live out that vocation and these commitments in ways unique to our specific identity — just as individual Christians do. We each live our discipleship with the particular gifts, strengths, weaknesses, and perspective given us by God.

This sometimes means that our convictions will bring us into conflict. But to suggest that we must choose between living our baptismal promises or living in relationship would, I suspect, make absolutely no sense to the God who created us. We are not in relationship to one another because we *like* each other or because we *agree* with each other. We are in relationship to each other because we are baptized into the one body of Jesus Christ, and therefore belong to one another.

The road the UCC took in 1957 has taken on incredible new dimensions 50 years later. The diversity we experience, including that brought about by immigration, has led the UCC to consider in new ways what it means to be a "united and uniting" church.

3. Is the quest for Christian unity obsolete in this age of interfaith conversation?

In every setting of the life of the United Church of Christ — local church, regional, national and international — are signs of active and creative engagement with people of other faith traditions. The broadest definition of "oikoumene" is "the whole inhabited earth" — our vocation as a church committed to reconciliation requires that we put energy into relationships with all people.

We have a very long way to go to heal the divisions created by history among Christians and those of all faiths.

It has been said for nearly two decades that we have entered the "winter" of ecumenical relationships. Presumably the implication is that ecumenism has reached the last phase of its life and is nearing death. When I

survey, the traditional ecumenical institutions and their funding, it is easy to see how this anxiety can gain momentum.

I believe that this is a very naïve reading of the current ecumenical reality.

First, Ecumenism has *never* been easy work, and the "good old days," are probably nostalgic reflections. This is not to say that we can't all remember a time when some things were better, or easier, or more enthusiastically received, than they are today. We can all identify those elements of ecumenical life. But it is equally easy to identify stories of hardened division among churches even during the "heyday" to which some look when proclaiming this "winter." I'm not sure it was ever as good or as easy as some would like to make it seem in comparison.

The institutional face of ecumenism is changing. In 1957 one of the predominant ways churches expressed their commitment to unity was through institutional merger. Today full communion relationships and other very creative partnerships are the models of Ecumenical relationship.

This, however, should never be equated with a diminishment of Christians to their commitment to the prayer of Jesus found in John 17 — "that they may all be one...that the world might believe..." There continues to be far more examples of ecumenical commitment in local, regional, national and international settings than I could ever count.

Even if it is true that we are in the "winter," anyone who has a garden knows that very important things happen to organic life during the winter.

If in fact it is a "winter," for the Ecumenical/movement, it may be nothing more than the natural cycle of rest, rejuvenation and change that has been the constant for life on earth since the first moments of existence. This gives me enormous hope, for our own faithful work is only a small part of the whole — the rest is in the saving and mysterious action of God.



Reflections on Diversity

By: Kathy Clark

When I began working for the Southeast Conference 5 years ago, I had no idea what gifts and graces were in store for me. My church experiences up to that point in my life had been in predominately Euro-American, middle class, moderate-to-liberal, suburban settings. There were many gifts to be found in those churches, to be sure. But, if truth be told, I did not know what I was missing until I entered the world of the Southeast Conference.

A visit to each of the settings of the Theology Among the People (TAP) program, the ministry I am privileged to direct, will only begin to reveal what we have come to call "our rich diversity." From rural communities to large metropolitan cities; from deeply rooted, historical congregations to churches that are brand new to our denomination; from mega-sized churches to nuclear family-sized churches; from theologically conservative congregations to those that are more liberal — the church is unique in each of these settings. And yet we all are one. We do not call ourselves "The **United** Church of Christ" for no reason!

"I am so grateful to be a part of the United Church of Christ. I have grown to love our denomination and to love God even more because of my experiences within it."

What holds us together? It is not shared history, common experience, geographic proximity, or even theological perspective. Because we do not all share the same ecclesial lineage, have the same experiences, live near one another, or even understand who God is in the same way. We are a family made up of different races, ages, ethnicities, abilities, gender identities, orientations, and languages — as unlikely a fellowship as one can imagine. Even so, our common life would be diminished without even one of our congregations — no matter how remote or small or different it might be.

What holds us together is our unity in Christ, in

whom there is "no east or west ... no south or north." (We do not call ourselves "The United Church **of Christ**" for no reason, either!) What holds us together is that commitment we call "Covenant," rooted in Christ who is the New Covenant. It is our Covenant, with God and one another and with the wider church, that supersedes differences and disagreements and allows us to recognize those differences (and even our disagreements) as gifts and graces.

I am so grateful to be a part of the United Church of Christ. I have grown to love our denomination and to love God even more because of my experiences within it. For God has been revealed to me in ways I could not even imagine before meeting, sharing, learning and growing with the members of our Conference.

Thanks be to God for the rich diversity that is ours!

Kathy Clark is the Director of Theology Among the People (TAP), a leadership development program of the Southeast Conference for lay ministers. For more information about TAP, or to find groups near you, e-mail kclark@secucc.org or visit our website at www.secucc.org



Conference News & Announcements

"Highlights of the Southeast Conference Board of Directors' Meeting September 14-15, 2007"

The Stewardship and Finance Committee reported that the Stewardship Development Leadership Event, August 18th was a success, and will serve as a model for future events.

We welcomed **Anil Henry**, who gave us a compelling report on his work at the Mungeli Christian Hospital in Central India. Anil is a Commissioned Minister of this Conference.



Susie Smith is planting a new church in Clemson, South Carolina

The Board voted unanimously to call **Susie Smith** to serve as Pastor of Peace Congregational United Church of Christ, in Clemson, SC, our most recent church start. The congregation which will start worshipping in December, gathered 30 people for a worship service in September.

We received a report from the Capital Campaign Development — Sub-committee. An advisory committee is being formed to direct the first year of a feasibility study.

A Women's Task Force has been organized, and the names of the member will be announced within two months.

Reports from the National setting of the UCC:

Gwen Thomas, a member of Victory UCC, Stone Mountain, has been named the Southeast Conference representative for the Coalition for GLBT Concerns.

We received a report that over 70 people from the Southeast Conference attended General Synod XXVI in Hartford.

John Gill, our Representative to Justice and Witness Ministries urged our continued growth in generosity to Neighbors in Need. **Tim Downs** reported for **Sarah Kim** that the Local Church Ministries is ending the final phase of its search for a new Executive Minister.

Interested in submitting a resolution on the floor of the Southeast Conference Annual Meeting, June 14, 2008? Now is the time to act! Resolutions may be submitted for consideration by the Annual Meeting of the Conference, but they must be submitted in accordance with the procedures laid out by the Board of Directors. All resolutions must have been voted upon on the floor of a properly called congregational meeting, and are submitted by a congregation. The resolutions must be received by the Conference office two week prior for review by the Board; which will meet on April 4, 2008.

Southeast Conference is hosting the UCC National Youth Event Again! The 2008 UCC National Youth Event, *Living the Life*, will take place **July 24-28, 2008** at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN. The cost? \$345! Visit www.ucc/youth for youth events news and updates, and start planning to be there now!

The Southeast Conference sent **41 women to the UCC Southern Regional Women's Event in Blowing Rock, NC**, October, 26-28. Included in those numbers were 20 women from **Pleasant Hill Community UCC**, and five women from **Sandy Creek UCC**.

Fall Meeting of the Alabama-Tennessee Association, September 28-29

Over 80 people gathered at the Fall Meeting of the Alabama-Tennessee Association of the Southeast Conference, UCC, at **Brookmeade Congregational UCC, Nashville**. The theme, "Caring for God's Creation" was developed through Bible study, worship, workshops and keynotes. The hospitality extended by the church set a new standard of culinary excellence.

The leadership of the Association was present in a number of settings throughout the two day event. **Christophe Ringer**, pastor of **Howard Congregational UCC, Nashville**, was the opening preacher at worship Friday evening. **Rev. Doug Hunt**, a member of **Church of the Savior UCC, Knoxville** led a Bible study on Genesis 1:31. Officers of the Association **Don Clark** and **Dan Rosemeyer** assisting in the planning of the event, as did **Jim Deming**, Interim Pastor of **First**

United Church UCC, Nashville. Others involved in the program leadership included **Darcy Freedman**, Director of the Food Security Partners of Middle Tennessee; **Dr. Robert Wingfield** of Fisk University, **Sandy Kurtz** and **Winston Huff**, both local leaders in environmental issues.

East Alabama-West Georgia Association Celebrates 75th Annual Meeting

The 75th Annual Meeting of the East Alabama/Southeast Conference was held at the **Allen Retreat Center** in Lafayette, AL, on October 6, 2007. The event was hosted by the newest congregation of the Association, **Sandy Creek United Church of Christ**. There were 20 people in attendance from **Sandy Creek UCC**, **Lanett Congregational Christian UCC**, and **Oak Grove Christian UCC**, **Pine Mountain, GA**. The opening devotion was led by **Louise Cox**, member of Sandy Creek UCC, reflecting on aging and wisdom. (Best line of the day from Louise: "The difference between good looking and looking good is 30 years".)

The Church and Ministry Committee requested the renewal of licenses to preach for **Hugh Hogan** and **Terrance "Rip" Hardman**, both of **Lanett Congregational Christian Church**. We recognized with appreciation the presence of **Allen Hollis** and **Buddy Nolles**, both retired. We also noted the passing of **Arthur Daley**, member of **Lanett Congregational Christian Church, Lanett, AL** with appreciation for his ministry. There is an effort to organize a TAP (Theology Among the People) group at Sandy Creek UCC.

Georgia-South Carolina Association Fall Gathering Hosted by Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta, GA

Pilgrimage UCC, Marietta, GA served as the host of the fall gathering of the Georgia-South Carolina Association, which was held October 13th. The meeting, which was a duly called Ecclesiastical Council gathered to consider the ordination papers of **Duncan Freeman**, a member of **Church of the Savior, Roswell, GA**, and **Lesley Raymer**, a member of **Virginia-Highland Church (A UCC and Baptist Congregation)**, Atlanta. Following the presentations, both candidates were approved for their next steps toward ordination; Duncan approved for ordination based on his call to chaplaincy in the Navy, and Lesley, approved for ordination pending a call.

Recommended Readings:

The Practicing Congregation, by Diana Butler Bass. Published in 2004 by the Alban Institute, Herndon, Virginia.

Starting a New Church: The Church Planter's Guide to Success, by Ralph Moore. Published in 1996 by Regal Books, Ventura, California.

The Ripple Church: Multiply your Ministry by Parenting New Churches, by Phil Stevenson. Published in 2004 by the Wesleyan Publishing House, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches, edited by Robert Webber. Published in 2007 by Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Peace (Understanding Biblical Themes), by Walter Brueggemann, revised edition published 2001 by Chalice Press.

First appearing in the 1970s, Brueggemann's discussion — both theological and practical — of the biblical concept of "shalom" remains timeless, relevant and compelling. This work provides a substantive biblical and theological foundation for peace building and conflict transformation.

Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman's Search for Everything Across Italy, India and Indonesia by Elizabeth Gilbert (published in 2007 by Penguin).

Following a divorce in her early 30s, the author

sets out on a spiritual journey of self-discovery with three main stops: Rome, for pleasure (mostly of the eating variety); an ashram outside of Mumbai, for spiritual searching; and Bali, for "balancing." Told with self-deprecating humor, the work is a bit irreverent but insightful and entertaining.

Freedom from Fear and Other Writings: Revised Edition, by Aung San Suu Kyi (edited by Michwael Aris, with forwards by Vaclav Havel and Desmond M. Tutu; revised edition published in 1996 by Penguin).

Nobel Peace Prize winner for 1991, Aung San Suu Kyi is currently under house arrest in Myanmar (Burma) and serves as the nation's conscience against an oppressive military regime. Compiled by her husband, Michael Aris, this volume includes a wide selection of Aung San's writings which give the background for the current unrest in the country and outline her non-violent political philosophy. This book is particularly relevant in light of the ruling junta's recent violent response to peaceful demonstrations by Buddhist monks, students, and others in this Southeast Asian country.

For additional information on any articles or activities, contact Tim Downs at tdowns@secucc.org or call the conference office at (404) 607-1993, or outside the Atlanta area at (800) 807-1993.

AROUND THE CONFERENCE

News from Local Congregations

Unity United Church of Christ, Montgomery, AL, one of our newest church starts, Pastor, **Bennie Liggins**, signed a covenant through which they were accepted as a Partner in Building in the United Church of Christ. As a Partner in Building they are eligible to receive financing for their church building which they have occupied on the basis of a least to purchase agreement. Their acceptance as a partner was celebrated at a worship service with 176 people in attendance September 23rd. Conference Minister **Tim Downs** was present as were **Sheila Kinzer** and **Andy White** from the Evangelism Team of Local Church Ministries of the UCC.

Tap Begins Again — Talladega

The newest Tap group meets at First Congregational UCC, Talladega, Alabama, where Reginald Holloway was recently installed as Pastor. Members of the TAP group include (from left to right) Ms. Sadie Curry, Pastor Reginald Holloway, Ms. Shirley Frazier, Mr. Harvey Calhoun, and Ms. Mary Calhoun. The group completed their first course, Psalms, Spirituality, and Theological Reflection, in October.

Churches are encouraged to submit items of interest to this column. Please send to tdowns@secucc.org.